



THE SAUSAGE FACTORY

J30: A strike for us all

On Thursday 30th June (J30) lecturers at Leeds Metropolitan will on strike to defend attacks on their pensions. They will be joined by 750,000 other lecturers, teachers, school students and public sector workers across the country.

Staff from the University of Leeds will not be striking as they are on a different pension scheme (USS) to pre-1992 universities. Although there is a ballot currently being undertaken on future of the USS scheme, with potential industrial action in the autumn.

Despite not officially being on strike, staff at the University are being asked to strike unofficially, to show solidarity with workers at Leeds Metropolitan and to defend attacks on all our lives more generally.

"But it's not our strike..."

1) It is colleagues in your/our union, the UCU, who are on strike at Leeds Met.

Attacks on them are attacks on us all. Institutional boundaries should not be used to divide us.

2) Although the strike has been called officially over pensions, it should be taken up as a generalised fight-back against government cuts and the assault that is underway against social housing, health-care, social care, childcare, museums, swimming pools,

public toilets, rape crisis centres, domestic violence shelters and all areas of social life. The strike is just one part of resistance against the sustained degradation of collective life that we are seeing unfold.

For these reasons, you should join colleagues and other public sector workers on J30 on the pickets lines, for a rally in City Square and for afternoon actions in the town centre.

What you can do:

- 1) **Don't work:** call in sick, take a day's leave.
- 2) **Encourage others not to work.**
- 3) **Join colleagues on the picket line:** Sam, Leslie Silver Building, Leeds Met.
- 4) **Join the rally:** 12pm, City Square
- 5) **Join afternoon actions in the town centre after the rally**

For more information see:

www.j30strike.org



**STOP
WORK
AND
FIGHT
BACK**

www.j30strike.org

What's in a strike? Would that which we call rebellion, by any other name smell as sweet?

A strike is not a protest. In a protest, you make your voice heard and speak 'truth to power', as if truth were some magic word. But voices can be silenced and a protest can be ignored. Worse still, by confronting power, in asking for something to be different, the powerful are legitimised. After all, dissent was permitted, in its bounded moment. Democracy was done.

A strike is more than a register of discontent. It goes beyond mere expression of opinion. It is a refusal. A refusal to comply, to be pushed around, to submit to authority. A refusal to perform our daily dance. And a strike is much more than a refusal.

A strike is more than a refusal because it is a recognition of our power. We recognize our power because without the university's workers - staff and students alike - there is no university. But it is still more than that, because we do not only want to refuse, to say no, but to build something new.

There is a contemporary adage that 'strikes don't work'. It's true that the tightening of union laws and have limited unions' abilities to act. It's true that there has been a powerful campaign to signify unions as outmoded, anti-modern and anti-progress. Yet the withdrawal of labour remains one of the most effective ways to challenge employers and the government, particularly in the current context of attacks on social justice, distribution of wealth and the erosion of shared public goods.

A strike is the collision of labour and capital. It is a hit against capital. It is the withdrawal of labour which stops capital working and circulating. In stopping the circulation of capital, accumulation is also halted. There is nothing capital likes less. Yet this is not the only way to strike.

During Fordism, the time of a singular workplace, a 9-5 job for life, strikes based on individual workplaces were the most effective means of stopping the machines of capital. Now, for those of us working in post-Fordist workplaces, such as the university, new questions arise about the form strikes might take. We no longer work standard 9-5 jobs and our workplace rarely feels collective. Instead our labour is largely 'immaterial' and hence not confined to a collective production line producing tangible commodities, but rather to seemingly individualised and intellectualised tasks from which it feels impossible to clock-off. What happens if we refuse to teach? Refuse to write journal articles? Books? Funding grants?

The question of this post-Fordist age requires us to ask how can we strike when we are precarious and dispersed? When have no fixed workplace? When unemployment and migration make us interchangeable? How can we strike if we do not have a job at all?

These questions are not purely theoretical, but increasingly urgent and they are already being played out in practice. The struggle of the *piqueteros*, in Argentina, shows us that we can strike against capital by shutting down the roads, the material spaces through which capital must travel in order to accumulate. Strikes have reduced the working day, helped end wars and toppled governments, most recently the brutal Mubarak regime in Egypt. Vince Cable's recent threat to tighten strike legislation in response to widespread industrial action is a

Patrick Rolfe

1987-2011

*You will always be fighting
alongside us comrade!*

patent indication of just how effective strikes can be and the threat they pose to the day-to-day workings of capital.

There are dangers too. A strike can become institutionalised. It can become nothing more than a protest, a mere register of discontent, just different expression of our daily dance. Union leaders can sell us out. And often, they do.

Strikes, like protests, can act to legitimise. Just as protests legitimise the right of the powerful, strikes legitimise the system of exploitation we know as work. By refusing to work under particular conditions it suggests that we would accept some rearrangement whereby we continue to work for the private gain of others, but under marginally 'fairer' or more 'equitable' terms.

But this does not make the strike useless, but for its real power to be shown it must spread. It must grow, move and be produced by – and produce - new imaginaries. A strike can be so much more than merely a refusal. It can free up our time and energy. Rather than going through the motions of the work day, we can create, together, collectively. We can meet with other workers both in and outside the workplace, practice new forms of solidarity and discover the commonalities between us. Through this creation we refuse to align ourselves with the values of capital and instead commit to creating alternatives of solidarity and community.

The generalised strike moves the strike on from merely a defensive position of small groups of workers against particularised conditions, and from a mode of resistance to one of transformation. It does not just defend and legitimise the present, or call for a return to the halcyon days of Fordist stability, but demands something new.

We will strike, but not as they want us to!

Strike/Occupy/Transform!